

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the connector service?

The connector service links people with a trained volunteer who offers practical support to help them connect with the outside world and their community.

The eventual aim is to give clients more confidence to engage with their interests. The service is time limited and focused on the achievement of specific goals.

The connector service aims to:

- **Link clients** with a **trusted connector volunteer** with whom they can develop a relationship and who offers **practical support** to help them achieve their goals.
- **Promote self-management** through the use of **person-centred** methods and an **empowering approach** that involves clients in the goal setting process.
- **Support** clients to access other services and groups being offered by the **Community and Voluntary Sector**.
- **Utilise the power of volunteering** - trained volunteers bring with them a huge range of **life experience**. Also, the benefits for the client in knowing the volunteer **wants to spend time** with them and is not being paid can have huge value.

What types of client goals are supported?

A range of individual client goals can be supported. This could be attending an arts and craft group or an exercise class, going to choir practice, going to a local allotment or going for a walk around the local park. The client should come to the service with an identified goal in mind.

How long is a client supported by the connector service?

Typically, a volunteer will meet with a client for up to 6 sessions. However sometimes it can take longer and will require further sessions. This might mean meeting on the doorstep for the first visit and going for a walk to the park the next time.

Who can make a referral and how?

Any professional can refer to us using our referral form, but we ask that those wishing to make a referral do so in line with our criteria. We are happy to discuss possible referrals via telephone if referrers are unsure whether our service is suitable for a client. [Please see the full referral criteria in the Social Prescribing information pack.](#)



External agencies can find the referral form on our website:

<https://www.togetherco.org.uk/social-prescribing>.

Please click 'Make a referral' at the bottom of the page.

If you have any queries, then you can contact us on 01273 775 888 or email hello@togetherco.org.uk.

Who should be referred to the connector service?

Individuals who: are socially isolated; want to take up a social activity or hobby; have *mild* depression, anxiety, or stress; want to volunteer or return to work; are carers or have a long-term physical health condition. [Please see the full referral criteria in the Social Prescribing information pack.](#)

Who cannot be referred to the connector service?

A person who is unlikely to engage effectively or appropriately with a volunteer to make steps towards their goal, e.g., people with very complex needs, who are eligible for support from secondary care mental health or a recovery worker, have a dementia diagnosis, have just been released from prison or are known to be violent. [A full list of screening questions is available in the Social Prescribing information pack and if in doubt, please call us.](#)

Can individuals self-refer?

Individuals can self-refer to the service. The referral form can be found on our website: <https://www.togetherco.org.uk/social-prescribing>. Please click 'Make a referral' at the bottom of the page.

[Please see the Together Co Social Prescribing information pack for further information on this service.](#)

How does the connector service help?

There is evidence that a connector service can help to build people's confidence and willingness to engage in new activities. In addition, through supporting people to connect with their community, it has shown to improve feelings of empowerment and reduce feelings of loneliness.

We demonstrate that clients achieve:

- Improved independence
- Increased confidence
- Reduced risk of, or actual, isolation
- Improved wellbeing and quality of life

“My connector was very helpful; Anna increased my confidence and supported me to be able to go out on my own.”

In 2021-22 we matched 70 clients with volunteers

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<p>Initial telephone assessment with a Social Prescribing Link Worker</p> <p>Link Worker agrees goal with client</p> <p>Social Prescribing service offered if required</p>	<p>Client matched with appropriate connector volunteer</p> <p>Agreed goal confirmed with client and volunteer</p> <p>Number of sessions agreed, typically around 4-6 sessions</p>	<p>Client and connector volunteer meet for sessions</p> <p>Coordinator will check in with client and volunteer halfway through</p>	<p>Goal achieved</p> <p>Connector support ends</p> <p>Check in with client within 2-4 weeks of service ending</p> <p>Client referred for further support if appropriate</p>

How We Work & Client Stories

Pat - Goal: To leave the house

Pat is in his 70s, he had a fall and had been using walking sticks to get out and about. He had recently been given a new 'walker' but hadn't used it as he felt too nervous to go out on his own. He had spent months not going out and his legs were now weaker due to lack of exercise.

After going out a few times with our connector Jane, Pat said he felt much more confident than he had expected and that it was just knowing someone was alongside him. Jane and Pat met once a week and each time Pat went further. After three weeks, Pat set a new goal of getting to the local shop so he could buy a few groceries.

Fran - Goal: To feel more connected to her community.

Fran is 62 and works in the NHS; she moved to Brighton just before lockdown in March 2020. Due to the timing of the pandemic, Fran never had the chance to connect to her new community and as a result became low, anxious, and withdrawn and was eventually signed off work.

Work was Fran's only connection to people, and without it she was left feeling isolated and stuck. Fran agreed to taking part in the connector project if she could meet up with someone informally to speak conversational French.



Fortunately, one of our connector volunteers is a French speaker, and Fran and Jo have since met up walking around Fran's neighbourhood speaking in French. Fran is now back at work and says she is coping much better and will engage more with her community once her confidence levels have risen.

John - Goal: To get to a new art group

John had been suffering from anxiety for some time, which meant he had not been connecting with other people or enjoying his hobbies. He told us that he missed having opportunities to be creative, and when he learnt about a new local art group, he decided he would really like to attend.

Unfortunately, when the day of the art group came, he felt too anxious to go into the venue where the group was meeting. He agreed to be supported by a connector next time, who met him at the bus stop and went to the first class with her. John felt more able to join the group and agreed that his connector would leave 15 minutes before the end of the next session. Over the next few meetings his connector left earlier each time, and now John feels confident to go to the group independently.